

Evaluation and Outcome Guide

Guidance and Tools for Legacy Grantees

Introduction

“How are things going? Are we making a difference? Are the participants benefiting? How can we demonstrate that this activity should be re-funded?”

Program evaluation helps answer these questions. The data collected can be used to improve program services, document best practices, highlight program outcomes, and inform funders. It tells us what works and what does not work. It can increase a program’s capacity to conduct a critical self-assessment and plan for the future in alignment with the [organization’s] strategic plan.”

– Wilder Foundation

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The Office of Grants Management (OGM) wants to support grantee efforts to learn what is working, adjust if necessary, and deliver impact. OGM reviews submitted work plans and budgets and grant agreements are not considered fully executed until these documents are approved. One important factor for approval of submitted work plans is the inclusion of outcomes that are measurable, reportable, and relevant to the proposed projects as well as the goals of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund as a whole.

Measurable Outcomes and ACHF

The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF) is one of four funds created by the 2008 passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution. The Legacy Amendment increased the sales tax by three eighths of one percent, and the revenues from the increase are divided between the funds with 19.75 percent going to the ACHF.

Projects funded by the ACHF must have measurable outcomes and a plan for evaluating the results. This requirement is set by [Minnesota Statutes 129D.17 Subdivision 2](#). The 2010 ACHF Planning Committee, a group representing major arts stakeholders in Minnesota, developed a set of eight goals for the first decade of the ACHF. These goals were created as a part of a larger [Twenty-Five Year Vision, Framework, Guiding Principles, and Ten-Year Goals for the fund](#). These goals further articulate the outcomes that ACHF projects should strive to achieve, and are as follows:

1. **Support:** Minnesotans express broad public support for arts, history, and cultural heritage programs.
2. **Engagement:** The number and diversity of children and adults actively engaged in lifelong learning in arts, history, and cultural heritage programs has grown significantly.
3. **Access:** Participation in arts, history, and cultural heritage programs by Minnesotans in currently underserved areas and/or groups has increased significantly.
4. **Transparency:** Minnesotans believe that the ACHF funding process has been public and transparent and that the results are being measured and communicated.
5. **Sustainability:** The financial vitality of the arts, history and cultural heritage sector has improved.
6. **Collaboration:** There are more, stronger and effective collaborations in the arts, history and cultural heritage sector.
7. **Funding Continuity:** The Legislature supports long-term plans that will have impacts beyond the biennium.
8. **Destination:** Minnesota is seen more favorably than other states as a place to live, learn, run a business and raise a family.

Another important document that outlines the intended outcomes of the ACHF is [The Legislative Guide](#) adopted by the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2010.

These laws, statutes and guidance documents provide much of the framework that the Department of Administration uses to outline requirements for grantees in [The Arts and Cultural Grant Guidelines](#) our office provides.

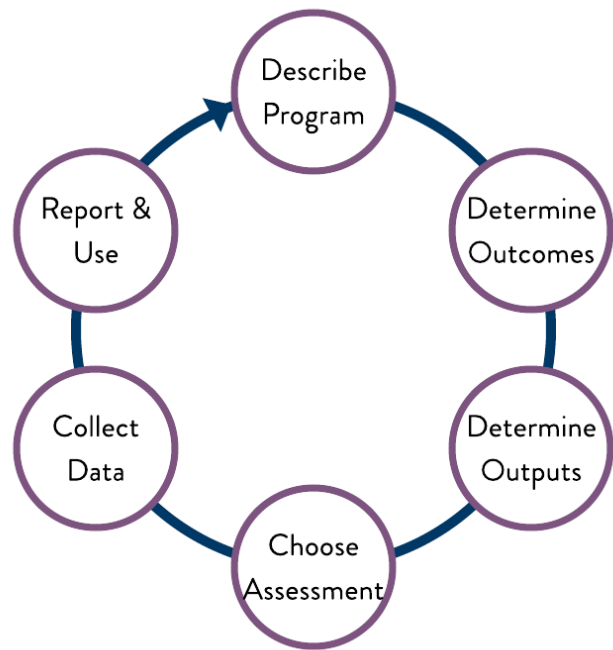
Program Evaluation Overview

One way for grantees to fulfill the requirement to have measurable outcomes, and also to improve their programming, is by applying concepts of program evaluation.

Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies and programs, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency (Calcutt).

Every organization is different, and programs are heavily context-specific. The evaluation process is no different. Each grantee will have a different approach, focus on different outcomes, and make different changes.

Grantees are not required to conduct a formal program evaluation. It is important, however, that grantees use an evaluation mindset to inform the project planning, outcome development, and outcome reporting processes. When OGM reviews and approves grantee work plans and budgets, staff are looking for well-defined outcomes. The process outlined in this document is essential for creating a successful work plan and budget.



The Office of Grants Management is asking grantees to use the approach described in this document. The steps for applying an evaluation approach to ACHF work plans and budgets is as follows.

- Describe Program: On the work plan
- Determine Outcomes: Use outcome development process defined in this guide
- Determine Outputs: Base on chosen outcomes
- Choose Evaluation & Assessment methods: For the chosen outcomes and outputs
- Collect Data: Use the chosen assessment methods
- Report on outcomes: In grant monitoring tools and Legislative report

It is important to remember that the evaluative process doesn't end after reporting. Grantees are encouraged to use data and lessons learned to continuously improve their Legacy programs.

A. ACHF Grant Requirements

All grantees must submit a work plan and budget outlining proposed projects. This document serves to define how the grant money will be spent, and sets the context for the goals of grant funded projects. It is also used to determine which expenses are billable to the grant. The budget tab is used to demonstrate which expense categories grant costs will be used to reimburse. The work plan, however, should be used to outline the work to be done, and the intended results of grant-funded projects. The work plan consists of the following parts:

- Project Title
- Short Description
- Project Start & End Dates
- FTE's (Full Time Equivalents)
- Evaluation & Assessment Methods
- Measurable Outputs
- Measurable Outcomes

The first four categories - Project Title, Short Description, Start & End Dates, and FTE's provide a brief overview of the work to be done.

Outcomes, Outputs, and Assessment methods describe the proposed goals and deliverables of grant funded projects. ACHF projects are required to have measurable outcomes and a plan for evaluating the results per [Minnesota Statutes 129D.17 Subdivision 2.](#)

B. Why is this important?

A set of well-defined outcomes:

- Is an essential step in planning a successful project
- Helps project staff understand the necessary steps to achieve grant goals
- Helps management explain the project's value to important stakeholders such as boards, potential partners, project participants/end users, legislators and members of the public

C. Definitions

Outputs describe the work performed and who it reached.

Example outputs would be:

- Produced 10 episodes of radio show
- Event will feature approximately 9 musical artists, and will attract 1,500 attendees

Outcomes describe the change that happens as a result of a program.

Data about outcomes will be one of two types, quantitative and qualitative. An ideal project will include both types of outcomes.

Quantitative data is typically numerical. Examples of quantitative data might include:

- Program reach will increase by 500 listeners
- Increase access to museum programming and resources for schools throughout the state by 15%
- Engage an additional 6,000 Minnesota youth in outdoor educational experiences

Qualitative data often cannot be expressed as a number. This type of data is descriptive. Some examples are:

- Listeners will report feeling more engaged and invested in the area's artistic community
- Increased interest, understanding, and knowledge of Minnesota's Native American cultures
- Students, teachers, and districts feel supported in providing high-quality learning experiences
- Create better understanding and connection among members of diverse communities in Minnesota

D. Outcome Development

Success criteria are not always clear-cut, as a successful project can mean different things to different individuals. Financial staff and program staff may have very different ideas for what benchmark to use to measure a project's success. Determining success criteria is a good way for an organization to formalize standards with which to judge success. Formalization of success criteria not only allows an organization to say whether a project has been successful, it helps identify areas for potential improvement or expansion. It allows an organization to communicate to stakeholders easily about how a project is going. Components of project success can include staying in budget, meeting deadlines, quality, and stakeholder/project recipient satisfaction. Please go through the **Outcome Development Activity** in the appendix to walk through the development of outcomes and assessment methods.

Assessment Methods

There are a variety of data collection methods, and this document will very briefly explore a few of the options available. Feel free to use the resources available in the appendix of this document to learn more about data collection methods. Remember that each step of an evaluation should be informed by previous steps. Continue to review project outcomes as data collection methods are being determined.

It is important that the evaluation and assessment methods listed on the work plan are directly related to the outcomes listed for the project. When selecting assessment methods, it is best to use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

When choosing data collection methods, organizations should consider the resources available for evaluation, whether the evaluation is sensitive to the unique needs of respondents, how credible the evaluation and methods are, and the relative importance of learning different information. Some data collection methods are more expensive and accurate than others, and organizations will need to weigh the relative importance of data gained from different collection methods.

The assessment methods listed below are only a few of the options available. Grantees may already be using useful assessment methods to learn more about their program outcomes. Data from some social media sites can be useful if gathered purposefully. For example, for a video program shared on YouTube, the number of views can be a relevant measure. However, reporting on an organization's Facebook followers is not a useful measure for Legacy projects. A better measure for this case could be reporting on how often a post containing Legacy content is liked or shared. Unsolicited feedback can be really useful, but is only relevant to Legacy reporting if it specifically references a Legacy project.

E. Surveys

Surveys can be administered digitally or on paper. They can be taken at a specific point in time or provided to individuals to take when it suits them. These decisions can impact the number of, quality, and types of responses you will receive. If your audience is older, perhaps a digital survey taken in the home would be less convenient than a mailed survey. If you wish to receive feedback about an event, it may be best to have the surveys administered on site while the event is taking place. Consider going beyond simple member surveys in order to reach non-members and learn about specific programs in detail. Surveys can provide both qualitative and quantitative, but it is most often quantitative.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheap, quick• Easy and anonymous for respondents• Lots of data• Samples simple to find, easy to customize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback may not be as complete or careful as expected• Wording can bias response• Impersonal and incomplete

F. Interviews

Interviews can provide more in-depth information and complement information collected in other ways, like through surveys. They can be conducted formally by following a script, or they can be more flexible. The best interview style depends on context – what types of information are needed, and how experienced an interviewer is. The data from interviews tends to be qualitative.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full range and depth of information• Relationship building with participants• Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time consuming & expensive• Hard to analyze and compare• Wording and interview bias

G. Focus groups

Focus groups are a form of group interview, where 6-8 participants meet for 1-2 hours and discuss a specific topic, responding to a series of predetermined questions. This method of data collection can be used to determine program direction and focus, or to receive rich feedback about participant experience. The data from focus groups tends to be qualitative.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficient to discover common experiences and impressions among a group of people• Range and depth of information in short time frame• Key information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be hard to analyze and compare• Good facilitator is key• Scheduling can be difficult

H. Budgeting for Evaluation

While it is not necessary for ACHF grantees to conduct a formal program evaluation, or hire an evaluator, investing in these resources can be a valuable way to improve programs and their effectiveness. These resources can be expensive as evaluation costs can include staff salary, consultants, supplies, and more. In the long term, the value added by investing in evaluation may outweigh the upfront cost. Visit the [AEA website](#) to find an evaluator near you.

Outcome Development Exercise

Thinking through success criteria and how to measure project outcomes is most effective when multiple stakeholders are involved. Focus on one Legacy program at a time and, as a team, begin to work through the process of outcome development

1. Project Description

What is the project? *E.g. radio program, documentary, exhibit, educational program*

Why are you doing this project? *E.g. community demand, local cultural significance*

2. Project Reach

Does this project fill a gap? *E.g. underserved area, unique program, new audience*

Who benefits from this project? *E.g. listeners, students, teachers, musicians*

3. What does it mean for this project to be successful?

What does it look like for those who interact with the project? *E.g. listeners learn from the program, teachers feel supported, students are engaged*

How do you know that the project is successful? How does it look? *E.g. listeners report increased knowledge, artists report increased interest in their work, attendees report feeling more engaged with the local music scene*

4. Determine Outcome

Using the information about your project, its reach, and success criteria, create a statement about the change that will occur as a result of your project.

E.g. Listeners will report increased interest, understanding, and knowledge of Minnesota's Native American cultures.

Assessment method option: Focus group of listeners with participants solicited on-air

E.g. As a result of program participation, students will feel that their knowledge of STEM has increased.

Assessment method option: Retrospective pre/post survey – Survey students after the program regarding their knowledge of subject matter before and after the program to capture how it changed.

E.g. Audience members at a music festival will report feeling increased interest and engagement with the local music scene.

Assessment method option: Informal interviews with event attendees in between music sets at the music festival.

E.g. Regularly scheduled television program reaches more viewers.

Assessment method option: Neilson Ratings, YouTube Views, etc.

Online Resources

Office of Grants Management, Evaluation Tab – More Evaluation Resources

<https://mn.gov/admin/government/grants/best-practices/>

National Endowment for the Arts – Resources on Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement

<https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/program-evaluation-resources-and-performance-measurement>

University of Wisconsin-Extension – Planning a Program Evaluation: Worksheet

<https://goo.gl/mN8WIB>

University of Wisconsin-Extension – Logic Model Templates

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/programdevelopment/logic-models/>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation – Evaluation Handbook

<http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/W-K-Kellogg-Foundation-Evaluation-Handbook.aspx>

BetterEvaluation – Website with Detailed Information about Evaluation

<http://www.betterevaluation.org/en>

Local Evaluation Resources

Minnesota Evaluation Association

<http://www.mneval.org/>

Improve Group

<http://theimprovegroup.com/>

Rainbow Research

<http://rainbowresearch.org/>

Wilder Research

<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Pages/default.aspx>